

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) An information sharing apparatus, which communicates with at least one terminal corresponding to one of users, comprising:
 - an acquiring unit configured to acquire an information item ~~which includes~~ including an image of a person ~~person's face~~;
 - an extracting unit configured to extract a contour of ~~the~~ a person's face from the information item, to detect ~~the~~ an image of the person's face as a personal information item;
 - a generating unit configured to generate an anonymous information item by ~~deleting the personal information item from the information item~~ separating the detected personal information item from the information item, to obtain (a) the anonymous information item which is the information item including the information item except the image of the person's face and (b) the personal information item corresponding to the image of the person's face;
 - an encrypting unit configured to encrypt the personal information item;
 - a first storing unit configured to store the encrypted personal information item, ~~and the anonymous information item, and one of a plurality of levels which corresponds to the personal information item, the levels including (a) a first access level which is~~

assigned to a first group of users of the users who can access only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item and (b) a second access level which is assigned to a second group of users of the users who can access both of the anonymous information item and the personal information item;

~~a second storing unit configured to store a first access level which is assigned to a first group of users of the users who can access only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item, and to store a second access level which is assigned to a second group of users of the users who can access both of the anonymous information item and the personal information item;~~

a receiving unit configured to receive a request message for accessing the information item, the request message being transmitted from the terminal;

a first transmitting unit configured to transmit only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item to the terminal in response to the request message, when an access level predetermined to the one of the users is equal to the first access level;

a synthesizing unit configured to synthesize the personal information item with the anonymous information item[[,]] to obtain a regenerated information item including the image of the person's face; and

a second transmitting unit configured to transmit the regenerated information item in response to the request message, when the access level of the one of the users is equal to the second access level.

3. - 7. (Canceled).

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising a ~~third~~ second storing unit configured to store a pair of IDs ~~of each of the personal information item and the anonymous information item, one of the pair corresponding to the personal information item and the other of the pair corresponding to the anonymous information item;~~

wherein the synthesizing unit includes:

a second acquiring unit configured to acquire the one ID of the pair, based on another ID the other of the pair, ~~the another ID corresponding to the anonymous information item;~~ and

a third acquiring unit configured to acquire the personal information item which corresponds to the one ID of the pair and is to be synthesized with the anonymous information, from the first storing unit.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the generating unit generate the anonymous information item by overwriting into an area corresponding to the personal information item with [[in]] arbitrary symbols.

10. (Canceled).

11. (Currently Amended) A method for sharing acquired information items with a plurality of terminals corresponding to a plurality of users respectively, comprising:

acquiring an information item ~~which includes~~ including an image of a person
~~person's face;~~

extracting a contour of ~~the~~ a person's face from the information item, to detect
~~the~~ an image of the person's face as a personal information item;

generating an anonymous information item by ~~deleting the personal information~~
~~item from the information item~~ separating the detected personal information item from
the information item, to obtain (a) the anonymous information item which is the
information item including the information item except the image of the person's face
and (b) the personal information item corresponding to the image of the person's face;
encrypting the personal information item;

storing, in a first memory, the encrypted personal information item, ~~and the~~
anonymous information item ~~in a first memory device,~~ and one of a plurality of levels
which corresponds to the personal information item, the levels including (a) a first
access level which is assigned to a first group of users of the users who can access
only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the
personal information item and (b) a second access level which is assigned to a second
group of users of the users who can access both of the anonymous information item
and the personal information item;

~~storing a first access level which is assigned to a first group of users of the users~~
~~who can access only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information~~
~~item and the personal information item, and a second access level which is assigned to~~
~~a second group of users of the users who can access both of the anonymous~~
~~information item and the personal information item;~~

receiving a request message for accessing the information item, the request message being transmitted from one of the plurality of terminals;

transmitting only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item to the one of the plurality of terminals ~~terminal~~ in response to the request message, when an access level ~~predetermined to of~~ one of the plurality of users who corresponds to the one of the plurality of terminals is equal to the first access level;

synthesizing the personal information item with the anonymous information item, to obtain a regenerated information item including the image of the person's face; and

transmitting the regenerated information item in response to the request message, when the access level of the one of the users is equal to the second access level.

12. - 15. (Canceled).

16. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 11, further comprising:
storing, in a second memory, a pair of IDs ~~of each of the personal information item and the anonymous information item in the third memory device~~, one of the pair corresponding to the personal information item and the other of the pair corresponding to the anonymous information item;

wherein the synthesizing includes:

acquiring the one ID of the pair, based on ~~another ID~~ the other of the pair, ~~the another ID corresponding to the anonymous information item~~; and

acquiring the personal information item which corresponds to the one ~~ID~~ of the pair and is to be synthesized with the anonymous information, from the first memory device.

17. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 11, wherein the generating generates the anonymous information item by overwriting into an area corresponding to the personal information item with arbitrary symbols.